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General Assembly

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Sixty-ninth session
Agenda item 27
Advancement of women

Note verbale dated 5 February 2015 from the Permanent Mission of Bangladesh to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

The Permanent Mission of the People's Republic of Bangladesh to the United Nations presents its compliments to the Secretary-General of the United Nations and has the honour to forward herewith, in its capacity as Chair of the Governing Council of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, the text (in English and French) of the Outcome Document of the General Debate on the theme "Achieving gender equality, ending violence against women", adopted by the 131st Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, held in Geneva in October 2014, to the General Assembly (see annex).

The Permanent Mission of the People's Republic of Bangladesh to the United Nations requests the Secretary-General to circulate the present note verbale and its annex as a document of the sixty-ninth session of the General Assembly, under agenda item 27.

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Annex to the note verbale dated 5 February 2015 from the Permanent Mission of Bangladesh to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

[Original: English and French]

Outcome Document of the General Debate on the theme "Achieving gender equality, ending violence against women"

Endorsed by the 131st Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union

(Geneva, 16 October 2014)

In October 2014, we members of parliament gathered at the 131st IPU Assembly on the theme: "Achieving gender equality, ending violence against women".

Gender equality is at the heart of progress, peace and development. If we are committed to achieving peace and security in the world, ending poverty and achieving sustainable development, we must tackle this issue head-on.

No country today can claim to have achieved gender equality. Women account for half the world's population, yet they make up only 21.8 per cent of parliamentarians worldwide, they continue to earn systematically less than men for the same work, and over 31 million girls are prevented from attending primary school. Gender inequality holds all our countries back, and the struggle to overcome it must therefore be a priority for each and every one of us, both men and women.

Today, the scourge of violence against women is a key issue in every country and internationally. No nation is spared; the latest global and regional estimates by the World Health Organization show that one out of every three women worldwide has experienced intimate partner violence or sexual violence by someone other than a partner.

Whether in the public or the private sphere, violence against women and girls in all its forms and manifestations robs them of their dignity, violates their fundamental rights, damages their health, reduces their productivity and prevents them from achieving their full potential. It also has significant consequences for peace and security and a negative impact on development. We strongly condemn all forms of violence against women and girls.

Gender inequality and violence against women feed on each other. On the one hand, it is impossible to achieve equality between men and women without putting an end to violence against women; on the other, women's vulnerability to violence is heightened by unbalanced power relations between men and women. In order to address this problem, we must take into account the broader context of women's lives and the need to secure respect for all their fundamental rights.

Addressing violence against women is a complex issue that requires profound change. It means looking at power relations; confronting patriarchy, which permeates all aspects of our societies; changing mentalities; and challenging the social roles and stereotypes that we have internalized, including those related to men. It also means enabling women to take ownership of their lives, their bodies and their destinies since women who are empowered, including economically, are less vulnerable to abuse.

There is no one solution for achieving gender equality and putting an end to violence against women; instead, there are a variety of approaches that reflect the diversity of situations and national experiences. It is nevertheless within the reach of parliaments to develop key strategies and responses. If we have the commitment and the will, progress is an achievable goal.

The commitment to achieving gender equality and eradicating violence against women must first translate into the development of strong, comprehensive legislation that is non-discriminatory, supports women's empowerment and addresses all forms of discrimination. This means a legal framework with no loopholes, one that provides for the implementation of temporary special measures to level the playing field and facilitates gender mainstreaming. It also means a framework that is consistent with States' commitments under the international instruments on human rights and gender equality to which they are parties, such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

We need comprehensive legislation that criminalizes all forms of violence against women and includes provisions on prevention, protection and support for the survivors and prosecution and punishment of the perpetrators. It must also take into account and meet the needs of different groups of women, especially the most vulnerable, including girls, migrant women and refugee women. This is an area in which progress has been achieved; for example, two thirds of the world's countries now have laws criminalizing domestic violence.

Putting laws into practice remains the key challenge. Appropriate mechanisms must be envisaged in domestic law and budgets must be scrutinized to ensure that adequate financial and human resources are allocated to the effective implementation of legislation.

In order for laws to meet the needs of the survivors of gender-based violence, easily accessible services are fundamental. Several States have established women's shelters, hotlines and "one-stop crisis centres" that provide survivors of gender-based violence with legal, medical and counselling services. Investment in a justice system based on the protection of women survivors and their rights is vital; specialized courts on domestic violence and sexual offences are invaluable in that regard. In addition, law enforcement agencies must be trained to focus on the protection and dignity of the survivors and to secure criminal evidence so that more women will feel that it is safe for them to report violence and seek justice.

Enhanced implementation requires a coordinated community-based response to violence in which all stakeholders — including governments, parliaments, police, prosecutors, judges, health-care providers, social workers, women's organizations and religious and community leaders — have a role to play.

Awareness of the laws is also crucial. Legislation must be disseminated and made easy for people to obtain and understand, including through education, translation into local languages and public debates. For policies to be successful, sustained and effective awareness-raising campaigns are vital. All citizens, whether men or women, boys or girls, must understand that there is nothing private about violence and that it cannot be truly eliminated without an understanding that its tolerance in any form is unacceptable. In some countries, the support, cooperation and understanding of traditional leaders will be key to the success of any awareness-raising campaign.

It is essential to monitor the implementation of laws and policies. The oversight role of parliamentarians is key and must be strengthened, including by building partnerships across parties and with civil society movements. Information is also essential to the drafting and enactment of effective laws and the assessment of their impact. To that end we, as legislators, need to build our national statistical capacities and gather sex-disaggregated data and to focus particularly on the number of reported cases of violence against women and on the implementation of household surveys.

The specific situation of vulnerable groups should be taken into account and addressed as a priority. In particular, women's vulnerability to abuse and violence rises sharply in times of crisis. Women and girls are the main victims of situations of armed conflict, which, together with terrorist acts, insecurity and violence linked to drug trafficking, heighten their vulnerability and place them at greater risk of gender-based violence and abuse in the form of rape, kidnapping, forced and early marriage, exploitation and sexual slavery. Women's bodies are directly targeted by these horrifying crimes and by the increasing use of sexual violence as a weapon of war.

In light of the alarming reports of current violations of women's rights in conflict situations, we must condemn such acts publicly and denounce the use of religion and culture to justify them. We must also take urgent action at the national, regional and international levels to protect women and ensure that the survivors are given support, that they have access to justice and reparation and that the perpetrators are prosecuted. In this context, States must continue to fulfil their international obligations under the relevant human rights instruments and must implement in full United Nations Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), the Council's other resolutions on women, peace and security and general recommendation No. 30 of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women.

Girls constitute another vulnerable group and face additional forms of violence, including female genital mutilation and other harmful practices, forced and early marriage, and murder in the name of so-called "honour". In developing countries, one third of all girls will be married before they turn 18 and 3.3 million girls are at risk of genital mutilation. In 50 per cent of cases, sexual attacks target girls aged 15 or even younger. Tailored responses to the specific needs of girls must be developed. As parliamentarians, we have the obligation to speak on their behalf and defend their right to a childhood free from fear and violence.

Change starts at birth. Education is a powerful equalizer; it is the key to transforming mentalities, addressing stereotypes and discrimination and building a culture of equality and tolerance. Girls' access to education is essential for their social and economic empowerment and security. Educating boys and girls on human rights and gender equality from an early age — for example, through the use of appropriate games, plays and stories — would help to instil non-violence and respect in relations between the sexes. Teaching and learning materials used in the schools must also be reviewed in order to remove stereotypes, and families must be engaged in order to raise awareness about women's rights and challenge social stereotypes. Parental education on women's rights and gender equality is also needed.

The media, including social media, can be major allies in educating and raising awareness. They must not perpetuate stereotypes and gender inequalities or appear

to condone violence against women. With today's media reporting on acts of violence against women around the world, more and more people are becoming outraged by these crimes and calling for an end to impunity.

Achieving gender equality and ending violence against women is the responsibility of both men and women. The potential is there, and men are part and parcel of the solution; they should take an active part in the debate and stand up for women's rights. The silent majority of non-violent men must speak out now and assume their responsibilities alongside women.

Women's voices must also be heard. Women in leadership positions have the power to take specific action in response to the interests of and challenges faced by other women whose voices are not being heard or taken into account. However, women are still poorly represented in leadership positions and their presence in decision-making bodies must be increased; to that end, the adoption of temporary special measures should be considered.

Effective change requires both a strong institutional framework and national bodies with the power to take action. We must build our parliaments' capacity to put an end to violence against women and to achieve gender equality. Implementation of the IPU Plan of Action for Gender-sensitive Parliaments should serve as a reference as we introduce reforms and strengthen our institutions.

In 2015, we will turn the page on the Millennium Development Goals and celebrate the twentieth anniversary of the Beijing Platform for Action. The period 2015 to 2030 must be the final battle in the centuries-old fight for gender equality, and we must meet the challenge. As members of parliament, we vow to make that goal a reality.

Annex to the note verbale dated 5 February 2015 from the Permanent Mission of Bangladesh to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

[Original: English and French]

The role of parliaments in supporting an immediate and robust international response to the Ebola epidemic and in enacting laws ensuring an effective response to and preparedness for Ebola and other infectious disease outbreaks

Resolution adopted unanimously by the 131st Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (Geneva, 16 October 2014)

The 131st Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union,

Expressing concern at the unprecedented Ebola outbreak that has affected West Africa in the past months, and *alarmed* at the numerous deaths that have resulted, especially of multiple members of the same family and in the most vulnerable groups, such as health-care workers and women,

Also expressing concern at the high risk that the virus will spread around the world,

Aware that the Ebola outbreak in West Africa may, according to the United Nations, become a humanitarian disaster with immeasurable consequences,

Recalling that the Ebola outbreak in West Africa has been designated a Public Health Emergency of International Concern by the World Health Organization (WHO) and declared a threat to international peace and security by the United Nations Security Council,

Also recalling that, on 19 August 2014, the African Union Peace and Security Council invoked article 6 (f), on humanitarian action and disaster management, of the Protocol Relating to the Establishment of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union, and authorized the immediate deployment of ASEOWA (African Union Support to Ebola Outbreak in West Africa),

Further recalling that, on 18 September 2014, the United Nations General Assembly adopted resolution 69/1 approving the establishment of the United Nations Mission for Ebola Emergency Response (UNMEER) to stop the outbreak, treat the infected, ensure essential services, preserve stability and prevent further outbreaks,

Aware that the non-governmental organizations at the forefront of the fight against Ebola, such as Doctors Without Borders and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, deem the international response dangerously insufficient,

Acknowledging nevertheless that many countries have already increased their funding and material support for the countries affected in West Africa and deployed personnel on the ground to help contain the outbreak,

Noting the measures taken by the States affected in response to the Ebola epidemic, but aware that the means that the governments concerned are able to

mobilize may be insufficient, and that the shortcomings brought to light by the Ebola epidemic have revealed an urgent need for support,

Concerned that many countries continue to have poorly funded and weak health systems, outdated or inadequate health laws and regulations, and insufficient capacity under the International Health Regulations, and that this hamstrings national and international efforts to respond to outbreaks of infectious disease,

Bearing in mind that the countries concerned are already suffering shortages of food and drinking water and that their economies are collapsing as a result of disruptions to trade, commercial flights and agricultural activity,

Expressing concern that, as a result of inadequate investment in research, there is as yet no vaccine or effective specific treatment against the Ebola virus,

Taking into consideration that the achievements of the worst affected countries in terms of consolidating peace and development risk being wiped out by the Ebola epidemic, and *underscoring* that the epidemic is compromising the stability of those countries,

Noting the WHO advisory opinion on the negative consequences of the Ebola response, namely the isolation and stigmatization of the countries and region affected, and on the need for all countries, especially neighbouring States, to keep their borders open to goods and people, maintain air routes, strengthen national and regional preparedness, increase the exchange of information and reinforce their health systems,

Stressing that national, regional and international action and cooperation are required to check epidemics of serious infectious diseases and that a coordinated international response to the Ebola epidemic is therefore a vital and immediate need,

1. *Deplores* all loss of life in the Ebola epidemic;

2. *Expresses support* for the governments and populations concerned in West Africa and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which have been severely affected by the Ebola outbreak;

3. *Demands* that all political parties in the countries concerned work together in unity and harmony to facilitate, without delay, free and safe access for humanitarian organizations and their staff to areas where the population needs them;

4. *Recognizes* that national leadership and ownership of the Ebola response in the countries concerned remains the guiding principle for international support, in keeping with their right to self-determination under the Charter of the United Nations;

5. *Applauds* the commitment and contribution of those battling the epidemic on the front lines, notably national and international humanitarian relief workers;

6. *Deeply regrets* the international community's slow and generally insufficient response and the time lost in drawing up an effective and coordinated strategy, while *acknowledging* that a number of States and international organizations have already provided critical assistance;

7. *Urges* the relevant United Nations bodies, especially WHO, which must play a lead role, to take all necessary emergency measures to reinforce their

contribution to local, national, regional and international efforts to halt the outbreak of the Ebola virus;

8. *Welcomes* the establishment of UNMEER, which must work in close coordination with regional organizations such as the African Union and the Economic Community of West African States;

9. *Calls on* the countries affected, responding countries and the international organizations active on the ground to work together closely and share information so as to enhance coordination and ensure effective control of the current outbreak;

10. *Calls on* the States that have the requisite means and on international donors to mobilize without delay essential financial resources and capacities, including medical and logistical means that can be deployed on the spot (personnel, supplies, means of transport), paying particularly close attention to the protection of women and children and of health workers entering into contact with infected persons;

11. *Vigorously condemns* the stigmatization of the countries concerned and their citizens, as this may exacerbate their humanitarian plight and have a negative impact on their economies;

12. *Appeals* to States, in particular those in the region, and all competent stakeholders providing the assistance required to deal with the Ebola epidemic to redouble their efforts to heighten public awareness, apply security and health protocols, and correct the misinformation circulating about the disease's transmission and the scope of the epidemic;

13. *Invites* parliaments to promote effective policies to combat the Ebola epidemic at national and international level;

14. *Also invites* parliaments to enact the legislation needed to improve health systems and emergency preparedness, with a view to boosting the capacity to deal with the serious public health and humanitarian crises that may result from an infectious disease outbreak;

15. *Urges* the pharmaceutical industry, the private sector, research institutions, philanthropic organizations and governments to invest in research on viable treatment options and vaccines to treat and prevent Ebola and to make them available at an affordable cost to affected populations, especially the poorest victims;

16. *Recommends* that plans be drawn up to help the countries affected recover quickly from the negative effects of the Ebola crisis based on the lessons currently being learned;

17. *Also recommends* that the international community set up a rapid health response unit to cope with health crises of this kind, and *urges* it to learn from the management of earlier epidemics/pandemics;

18. *Urges* States and the international community to conduct worldwide awareness campaigns to prevent fresh outbreaks of Ebola;

19. *Suggests*, with regard to international development cooperation, that public health — and the prevention of health crises — be added as a core priority to cooperation programmes.

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Agenda items 15, 82, 106 and 121

The role of the United Nations in promoting a new global human order

The rule of law at the national and international levels

International drug control

United Nations reform: measures and proposals

Note verbale dated 5 February 2015 from the Permanent Mission of Bangladesh to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

The Permanent Mission of the People's Republic of Bangladesh to the United Nations presents its compliments to the Secretary-General of the United Nations and has the honour to forward herewith, in its capacity as Chair of the Governing Council of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, the text (in English and French) of the *report of the Standing Committee on United Nations Affairs*, adopted by the 131st Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, held in Geneva in October 2014, to the General Assembly (see annex).

The Permanent Mission of the People's Republic of Bangladesh to the United Nations kindly requests the Office of the Secretary-General to circulate the present note verbale and its annex as documents of the sixty-ninth session of the General Assembly under agenda items 15, 82,106 and 121.

15-01882 (E) 190215

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Annex to the note verbale dated 5 February 2015 from the Permanent Mission of Bangladesh to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

[Original: English and French]

Report of the Standing Committee on United Nations Affairs

Noted by the 131st Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union

(Geneva, 16 October 2014)

The Committee held three panel discussions over two days, on 14 and 15 October. Ms. D. T. Avgerinopoulou (Greece) introduced all the discussions in her capacity of President.

The first discussion took the form of an interactive debate with the United Nations Independent Expert on the promotion of a democratic and equitable international order, Mr. A. de Zayas. Mr. de Zayas drew from his reports to the United Nations Human Rights Council to argue for a deeper, more participatory form of democracy at both national and international level. He said that representative democracy had its inherent limitations: it only worked if parliamentarians were held accountable to their constituents. In too many countries, however, politicians fell prey to the influence of lobbies and other organized interests that were at variance with the popular will.

There were numerous illustrations of this, such as military and defence budgets that were not fully disclosed to the people and adopted without debate in parliament on the need to reduce military expenditure in order to invest more in education, health care and other public goods. Global military spending could easily be cut by, say, 10 per cent (of the current 1.3 trillion United States dollars annually) if all countries agreed to do the same, which would leave no one at a disadvantage.

Mr. de Zayas suggested that measures to strengthen representative democracy should include providing more real choices when it came to candidates running for election and weakening the grip of party leaders on elected representatives. Referendums should be used more frequently to allow people to have a direct say in government.

The same democratic deficit found in many countries, both developed and developing, permeated the institutions of global governance, from the United Nations to the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and the World Trade Organization. Those institutions should all be regrouped under the United Nations umbrella, and the United Nations itself needed to be made more accountable to the people. According to Mr. de Zayas, the constitution of a world parliamentary assembly of elected representatives would contribute to making the United Nations more responsive to the real concerns of people around the world. While that idea was accepted by one delegation in the room, it was rejected by another. The Committee President reminded participants of the core mandate of the IPU Standing Committee on United Nations Affairs, i.e. to hold hearings with United Nations officials, shape parliamentary input to major United Nations processes, and examine United Nations operations with a view to enhancing accountability.

There was a clear sense in the ensuing discussion with members that Mr. de Zayas's perspective resonated in several regards. Questions were raised about the democratic deficit at the global level, which included a Security Council that did not fairly represent the global community, the fact that developing countries were not members of key international bodies, and the growing influence of unaccountable transnational corporations at the United Nations and other global institutions. None of that was likely to change unless parliaments acquired stronger oversight capacities and the political will to hold governments to account.

The Committee's second panel discussion dealt with the question of corporate influence on United Nations decision-making. The panel consisted of Ms. P. Bayr (Austria), Mr. J. Kakonge, Permanent Representative of Kenya to the United Nations Office at Geneva, and Mr. J. Martens, Director of the Global Policy Forum. Mr. A. Motter, of the IPU Secretariat, moderated.

The overall conclusion of the discussion was that parliaments ought to pay closer attention to the growing relationship between the United Nations and corporations. While there might be some scope for the United Nations to partner with the corporate sector either at the global level or within countries, it was imperative that all partnership agreements be subject to strict mandatory guidelines and to regular reviews. United Nations agencies and programmes should adopt a common standard for dealing with the corporate sector. Corporate funding of United Nations offices and field operations needed to be made more transparent through mandatory disclosure and conflict-of-interest rules.

The United Nations lacked a proper vetting system to make sure that the corporate entities it worked with upheld the highest standards, which must go well beyond the 10 core principles of the Global Compact. It was contradictory for corporations that did business with the United Nations to follow those core principles at the same time as they undermined development goals by looking for tax havens or advocated policies (e.g. oil and gas subsidies) that affected climate change and development efforts. Good corporate citizenship should be defined in terms of respect for tax laws and government regulations, human rights and public goods.

A more fundamental problem was the United Nations growing reliance on the corporate sector to help establish global norms by including corporations on key advisory boards and other such decision-making bodies. Concomitant to that was the rising number of multi-stakeholder forums at the United Nations in which partners were invited to discussions with governments as if they were all on the same footing. Governments needed to better differentiate between partners and clarify that, in the final analysis, they were accountable to the people via their elected representatives. The institutional relationship between the United Nations and the IPU as a parliamentary organization could help strengthen that essential link between global and national levels of governance. By all accounts, the United Nations invested more resources in the relationship with the corporate sector than in that with parliaments. In an ideal scenario, the reverse should be the case.

The recent exponential growth in the number of corporate partnerships was closely linked to government cuts to the United Nations budget. The United Nations was being starved for resources, prompting it to reach out to the corporate sector for support for development-related initiatives. Corporations, for their part, tended to regard this as a good exercise in public relations and a way to ensure that the global regulatory framework remained fundamentally skewed in their favour. Corporations

had long preferred a regime based on the principle of voluntary compliance with respect to human rights and other standards. It was also possible that some corporate partners wished to ensure that a market-based approach remained the preferred policy option when it came to guaranteeing fundamental rights such as access to water or food.

Yet, in what might amount to an important shift on the part of the United Nations, a 2014 Human Rights Council resolution called for a human rights instrument that was legally binding on transnational corporations and other business enterprises. If properly implemented, the resolution would also help fill a gap in many national jurisdictions where legislation on corporate behaviour was lax. Ultimately, it was at the national level that action was needed to strengthen the legal frameworks for good corporate behaviour at all levels and in all jurisdictions. Here again, parliaments had a central role to play.

The Committee's third, interactive, panel discussion considered the process leading up to the 2016 United Nations General Assembly Special Session that would review progress on the goals set in the 2009 Political Declaration and Plan of Action on International Cooperation towards an Integrated and Balanced Strategy to Counter the World Drug Problem.

The discussion was co-moderated by Mr. A. Avsan (Sweden) and Ms. L. Rojas (Mexico). The panel comprised Mr. L. de Alba, Mexico's ambassador to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), Mr. J. L. Lemahieu, UNODC Director, Policy Analysis and Public Affairs, and journalist Mr. E. de la Reguera, and examined the tension between the law enforcement versus the prevention and rehabilitation approach.

The moderators pointed out that failure to discuss the issue nationally and internationally meant that serious problems — deaths in developed and developing countries; incoherent regional policies that had an unintended impact on neighbouring States; collateral damage on woman and children in poor communities; flourishing money-laundering, corruption and organized crime — were not being addressed. Criminal enterprises were described as akin to multinationals in their scope and impact. Inaction was leading to greater inequality within and between nations.

In the ensuing discussion, the participants pointed out that, while some nations were discussing legalization to reduce harm and generate tax revenues, others bemoaned the lack of debate and understanding in parliaments, among the general public and in the media. They referred to the need for access to proper basic health care, pharmaceutical products, treatment and pain mitigation, and suggested that new policies had to be predicated on individual human rights and be solidly grounded in the post-2015 development agenda. Account had to be taken of economic and social issues, and regional approaches adopted.

International conventions on drugs did not allow national frameworks the flexibility to tackle drug issues in the light of the local context, history and traditions. The capacity of public health systems to deal with opiates and pain management had to be enhanced.

The participants expressed concern for transit countries that dealt with the consequences of inaction in consuming and producing countries, even though the distinction between the two was becoming less relevant in the wake of new

developments, such as synthetic drugs that could be produced anywhere. They expressed a desire for further input, a flexible framework and the establishment of a coalition of the willing to work towards coherent strategies and implementation. The United Nations should involve more of its agencies, such as the World Health Organization, in tackling the problem, and each country should adopt a comprehensive approach, reducing consumption through education, treatment, supply restrictions, civil society awareness, enhanced security to combat corruption and a better legal framework. The impact of national policies at the grassroots level needed to be considered.

Mr. Lemahieu encouraged parliamentarians to post comments on the website of the United Nations General Assembly Special Session (www.ungass2016.org) and suggested that the IPU report on the panel discussion on "The legalization of drugs: Can it help curb organized crime?", held at the 128th IPU Assembly (Quito, March 2013), should also be posted there. Mr. de Alba noted that the current panel discussion was the first global meeting he was aware of that included the views of parliamentarians from a cross-section of Member States. He expressed frustration at the growing tendency to negotiate international agreements by consensus through the United Nations process, as the result was agreements aimed at the lowest common denominator.

It was recommended that the IPU provide a forum for further engagement leading up to the United Nations General Assembly Special Session. Parliamentarians wanted to be involved and explicitly referenced in the relevant United Nations documents.

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Security Council

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Sixty-ninth session
Agenda item 32
Prevention of armed conflict

Security Council
Seventieth year

Letter dated 5 February 2015 from the Permanent Representative of Armenia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Upon the instruction of my Government, I am writing to convey Armenia's grave concern about the significant increase in violations of the ceasefire regime by the armed forces of Azerbaijan on the line of contact between Nagorno Karabakh and Azerbaijan and across the border between Armenia and Azerbaijan. The extensive use of grenade launchers and mortars by the Azerbaijani armed forces is a matter of particular concern. It claims more casualties and destruction and is a new tactic aimed at further escalating the situation. Over the past two months the armed forces of Azerbaijan have been consistently conducting provocative subversive operations and shelling across the border and the line of contact, terrorizing the civilian population of the bordering villages.

Since the beginning of 2015, Azerbaijan has violated the ceasefire regime 2,784 times. The total number of casualties of the armed forces of Armenia and the defence forces of Nagorno Karabakh during the period from 1 January to 31 January 2015 stands at 8. There were also 12 wounded. One civilian was killed over this period. Armenia fully shares the concern of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Minsk Group co-chairs on the present escalation of tensions, as reflected in their statement of 27 January 2015. Despite this statement, Azerbaijan ignored the call and doubled the intensive violations of the ceasefire regime.

Armenia deplores Azerbaijan's continued policy of escalating the situation on the ground while refusing to demonstrate political will to achieve progress in the negotiations for the peaceful settlement of the Nagorno Karabakh conflict mediated by the Russian Federation, the United States of America and France (the OSCE Minsk Group co-chairs). Furthermore, Azerbaijan has refused to agree to the confidence-building measures proposed by the Minsk Group co-chair countries and supported by the Secretary-General. Due to its consistent insistence on "all or nothing" in the negotiations, wrongfully hoping to clinch more concessions,

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Azerbaijan bears full responsibility for the lack of progress in the peace process and consequently for the raising of tensions.

Armenia has continuously drawn the attention of the international community to the adventurous policy pursued by Azerbaijan and has stressed the importance of exerting a sobering effect on Baku so that it may refrain from its policy of acting against the calls of the international community.

In its statement of 27 January 2015, the OSCE Minsk Group co-chairs called on Azerbaijan to observe its commitments to a peaceful resolution of the conflict and to abide by the terms of the ceasefire agreement, and reminded Azerbaijan that violence undermines efforts to bring about peace. They also expressed concern about Azerbaijan's criticism of the negotiation process, the role of the Minsk Group co-chairs and the duties of the OSCE monitors.

Armenia is committed to achieving a durable peace and stability and security in the region and will continue to invest its utmost efforts towards the settlement of the Nagorno Karabakh conflict exclusively through peaceful means and on the basis of the purposes, principles and norms reflected in the Charter of the United Nations, the Helsinki Final Act and the provisions of the statements of the Presidents of the Minsk Group co-chair countries made at L'Aquila, Italy; Muskoka, Canada; Deauville, France; Los Cabos, Mexico; and Enniskillen, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

I kindly request that the present letter be circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 32, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Zohrab **Mnatsakanyan**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative